

SOCIAL ACTION NEWS-LETTER

No. 5, Vol. IX

Indianapolis, Indiana

May, 1945

The Federal Council and The Conscientious Objector

In the 37 years of its existence the American churches have learned to look to the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America for bold and courageous leadership in all matters affecting co-operative Protestantism. Particularly disappointing therefore is the hesitant, uncertain and cautious attitude which the Council continues to manifest toward the 8000 conscientious objectors now in Civilian Public Service. Although the Federal Council has had from the beginning a committee to deal with the conscientious objector issue, and though that committee is, or was until his recent election to the presidency of the Council, headed by Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, who is also chairman of the executive committee of the Commission on World Peace of the Methodist Church, it has been markedly ineffective in dealing with the problem. The following resolution presented by the committee and adopted by the executive committee of the Council on March 20, illustrates the lack of a constructive policy for meeting the realities of the situation.

"The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America is gratified with the recognition accorded conscientious objectors to war under the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940.

"We welcome the opportunities for constructive national service open to conscientious objectors under the trying circumstances imposed by a global war. In non-combatant services with the armed forces, in efforts to conserve our national resources, in caring for the mentally ill and the mentally deficient, in public health projects, on farms and as subjects for medical experiments, conscientious objectors have contributed to the welfare of the nation.

"It is our desire that the work of the conscientious objectors shall be utilized to the maximum social advantage. We believe that religious and social welfare organizations should have access to the services of qualified Civilian Public Service assignees who may seek work with such agencies.

"We believe the parole of imprisoned conscientious objectors should be facilitated under the procedures provided by law so that the nation may profit from their socially useful work.

"In keeping with the spirit and intent of the Selective Service Act we believe that the maintenance of conscientious objectors assigned to Civilian Public Service is properly the responsibility of the federal government.

"We believe that the earnings of these men now held in a frozen fund in the United States Treasury should be made available for the relief of their dependents and that just compensation should be provided when men are killed or injured in executing the duties to which they are assigned.

"We join our military leaders in paying tribute to those conscientious objectors classified I-A-O who are now serving with honor and often with heroism under fire in the armed forces, especially in the Army

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The Churches and the San Francisco Conference

Sobered by the death of President Roosevelt and challenged by the warning of his successor, President Truman, "If we do not want to die together in war we must learn to live together in peace," the United Nations Conference on International Organizations got under way in San Francisco on April 25. Despite some initial misunderstandings that tested tempers there were predictions of success from all quarters.

The churches of the world have a vital stake in the success of the conference. From it can come, literally, the salvation of the peace or the destruction of the remnants of western culture. No other international gathering in history has been the subject of so many fervent prayers. On its opening day prayer services were held in thousands of churches and earnest petitions for its success go up every day from millions of hearts.

If civilization is to be saved there must be at San Francisco a bold and daring leadership—a leadership such as Franklin Roosevelt would have given to it had he lived. The conference will succeed or fail to the extent that the delegates are able to rise above selfish national interests and seek solutions that will benefit all mankind. President Truman rightly said, "The responsibility of the great states is to serve, and not dominate the peoples of the world." Europe is today a festering sore of bombed, burned-out and ruined cities and farms, starved, disillusioned and diseased peoples. Millions of little people have been forcibly uprooted from their homelands by brutal aggressor armies. Other millions are now escaping from labor slavery in German war factories. The sufferings of these innocent peoples constitutes an entail of hatred that can keep Europe in turmoil for a generation and breed revolution and anarchy without international cooperation to assure reconstruction, justice, security and peace.

In the past quarter of a century the churches have come a long way in understanding of the meaning of the Christian gospel for contemporary life. We have become increasingly aware that Christianity is directed toward the salvation not only of the individual but of the total life of man. Man is to be saved *within* his total environment—family, community, state and nation—and not *from* it. If human personality is sacred then Christians cannot be content with conditions that frustrate or make impossible the fullest achievement of Christian personality anywhere in the world.

The church is today struggling to overcome barriers of division, of nationality, race and color and to achieve unity within its own ranks. It is apparent to everyone that war between nations disrupts Christian fellowship and puts the Christian in the position of having to choose between loyalty to a worldwide, age-long, supra-national and supra-racial Christian faith and allegiance to the political state of which he is a citizen. The kingdom of God—the

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Published monthly, except for joint July-August issue, by the Department of Social Welfare, The United Christian Missionary Society, 222 South Downey Avenue, Indianapolis 7, Indiana.

Subscription price 50 cents per year; with Social Action magazine \$1.00 per year.

Entered as second class mail matter September 2, 1943, at Indianapolis, Indiana, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

The opinions and points of view expressed in this publication are those of the editor and do not necessarily represent the convictions of The United Christian Missionary Society.



Acknowledgement

The editor of Social Action News-Letter is indebted to Mr. J. B. Hunter, Dr. George W. Buckner, Jr., editor of *World Call*, Dr. John W. Davis, executive secretary of the Board of Higher Education, for assistance in getting out the April issue of this publication while he was in the hospital for a physical check-up and a bit of surgery.

— James A. Crain.

Permanent FEPC Bill Stalled in Congress

The bill to make the President's Fair Employment Practice Committee a permanent arm of government is stalled in Congress now that Franklin Delano Roosevelt is no longer here to fight for it. The bill, known in the House as H. R. 2232, was reported out by the House Labor Committee on February 20, with strong bi-partisan support for its passage. The same provisions are embodied in S. 101. However, Senator Taft of Ohio introduced a counter-proposal to limit the FEPC to study of discriminatory practices in labor. Neither bill has been placed on the calendar. Until such action is taken no vote can be had either in the Senate or the House.

A temporary Fair Employment Practice Committee was set up under Executive Order 8802 when discrimination against Negroes and other minority groups in matters relating to employment reached a point where the war effort was being seriously interfered with and a march on Washington was threatened by those who were the objects of employment discrimination. From its inception the committee has done splendid work in removing causes of discrimination in jobs. The war effort has been materially advanced and serious racial clashes averted. However the committee can secure compliance with its directives only by persuading employers to accept its mandates or by asking the War Manpower Commission to withhold manpower from the offender until such time as compliance was secured. Under Presidential order war contracts cannot be awarded concerns who are guilty of discriminatory employment practices.

Passage of the Permanent Fair Employment Practice Act by Congress will give legal status to the committee and put the force of law behind its program. The bill is opposed by a strong group of anti-New Deal Democrats and by conservative Republicans who can be counted on to oppose all social legislation. Some such law is imperative if we are to avoid serious racial conflicts in industrial areas in the post-war period.

How to Create Racial Bitterness

Recently more than 100 Negro air force officers of the 477th Bombardment Group were sent from Freeman Field, near Seymour, Indiana, back to Godman Field, Fort Knox, Kentucky, under arrest and confinement in quarters, according to a United Press dispatch under date of April 21. The trouble which resulted in their arrest and return to Godman Field arose over the question of the right of Negro officers to use the field's officers' club.

The 477th Bombardment Group, composed of four squadrons of B-29 medium bombers and 400 Negro air force officers, was sent to Freeman Field for training. The permanent maintenance and training staff at the field consist of about 2500 white officers and some 600 white soldiers. Also present at the field are approximately 2500 Negro soldiers and the 400 Negro officers in training. When some of the Negro officers attempted to make use of the officers' club, Col. Robert R. Selway, field commander, ordered the club reserved for the exclusive use of the white officer-instructors. Copies of the order were presented to the Negro officers and they were asked to sign a statement indicating that they understood its meaning. Some signed, but others refused on the ground that the order was a violation of Army regulations. Subsequently, according to reports, three Negro officers "jostled" the provost marshal when he attempted to bar their entrance to the club. More than 100 of the Negro officers were placed under arrest and sent back to Fort Knox, where they were placed in confinement in quarters. War department officials are said to be investigating the incident.

This situation illustrates the dangerous turn our color conflicts can take in America. Under the law, officers of the United States armed forces are officers, regardless of color, race or creed, and as such are entitled to the privileges accorded to officers. Officers' clubs are usually open to all officers on the post. They are not private affairs but are under Army regulation. Therefore they cannot be reserved for the exclusive use of any group. The presence of 2500 white officers on the field would presumably tax the facilities of the average officers' club and the addition of 400 additional officers might intensify the problem. That fact however does not affect the main issue. Are officers' clubs for all officers or are they for the exclusive pleasure and relaxation of certain officers? Is the uniform entitled to respect for itself or is respect conditioned upon the color of the individual who wears it?

The Freeman Field incident is regrettable not only because of the discrimination involved, but also because of its possible effect upon the morale of our Negro population. They have endured the sacrifices of war with other Americans. They have bought war bonds to the full extent of their ability. They have sent 750,000 of their sons and daughters into the armed services. They have suffered their full share of casualties, of wounded and dead. People good enough to die for democracy ought to be good enough to enjoy the rights of democracy.

Whether these Negro officers acted with restraint and good judgment must await further investigation. But it is a fact that many difficulties have been put in the way of Negroes who have reached the officer level. Negro flyers have been given but limited opportunities to demonstrate what they could do, but as a group they have made good. The commander at Freeman Field has shown us a good way to make post-war race relations in America a source of bitterness and conflict.

On Social Frontiers

Churches in Northern California are making determined efforts to break down prejudice against minority racial groups, according to reports. The Northern California-Western Nevada Council of Churches has endorsed the plan of interracial churches. The action was taken under the leadership of Milo J. Smith, former secretary of the Northern California Christian Missionary Society, and prior to that secretary of the Board of Temperance and Social Welfare of the Disciples of Christ, with headquarters at Indianapolis, Indiana. Reports also indicate that First Christian Church, Oakland, California, and the First and West Side churches of San Francisco have welcomed Negroes and members of other minority races into fellowship. A growing number of churches of the Disciples of Christ throughout the nation are extending a welcome to members of other racial groups.

An alarming increase in the number of women alcohol addicts is reported by Dr. David Benjamin Rotman in the *Journal* of the American Medical Association. Dr. Rotman produced figures to show that the ratio of female to male alcoholics in the city of Chicago in 1931 was 1 to 5, but that in 1943 it was 1 to 2. Alcohol addiction is defined by Dr. Rotman as the use of alcohol in such a fashion that it got the user involved with the police. This is an inadequate method of determining alcohol addiction, since many persons under the influence of liquor become involved with the police who are not addicts in the sense that they compulsive drinkers. Police arrests include many who are occasional drinkers and whose involvement with police authorities is more or less accidental, whereas the true alcohol addict is one to whom alcohol has become a necessity and whose drinking is therefore compulsive. The test is also inadequate in that it fails to take into consideration groups whose social prestige and economic status protects them from police interference, except under unusual circumstances. Dr. Rotman's figures are therefore an index, not to alcohol addiction on the part of women, but to drunkenness among women in Chicago.

The 1945 session of the Yale University Summer School of Alcohol Studies will open on July 12 and close on August 7. Use will again be made of the classrooms, dormitories and refectory of the Yale Divinity School. The 37 lectures comprising the course will be classified under seven general heads: I, General introduction to the subject; II, The effects of alcohol on the individual; III, Mainsprings of the use of alcoholic beverages and of inebriety; IV, Factors in the prevention of inebriety as presented by sociological analysis; V, The effects of alcohol on society; VI, Measures of control applied in the past; VII, The treatment of alcoholism. Among the lecturers are to be outstanding scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and medical men.

The American Civil Liberties Union has announced that following repeal of the law requiring the payment of a poll tax as a prerequisite for voting by the Georgia legislature, action will be initiated in the federal courts to have declared similar laws now in force in Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama and Texas declared unconstitutional. The actions will be based on the contention that such laws abridge the constitutional rights of citizens. Only seven of the twelve Southern states retain poll tax laws. A strong National Committee to Abolish the Poll Tax has been formed with headquarters in Washington, D. C.

U. S. Drink Bill Seven Billion Dollars

"The people of the United States last year spent more than seven billion dollars for alcoholic beverages, or approximately \$54 per capita, according to the latest estimates of the Department of Commerce.

"That the outlay for such beverages is going up is shown by the fact that the 1944 expenditures were 18% above those of 1943. However, more than half of this increase was accounted for by the increase in the excise tax on distilled spirits from \$6 to \$9 per gallon on April 1, 1944. Almost 30% of the total outlay, or approximately two billions, represented the amount of the tax paid on last year's purchases.

"Consumer expenditures for alcoholic beverages last year comprised more than 5% of the aggregate income of individuals after deductions for payment of personal taxes.

"More than half of these expenditures were for distilled spirits, including packaged goods and mixed drinks. Expenditures in this category rose by more than one-fifth over the 1943 outlay. Expenditures for wines increased only slightly over 1943. Purchases of packaged and draft beer, which aggregated almost \$3 in 1944, increased by 15% over 1943.

"The substantial increase in expenditures for distilled spirits last year is credited in part to an improved supply situation. Stocks had declined substantially after the cessation of domestic production in October, 1942. The reduced supply, however, was supplemented in 1943 by increased imports, particularly of rum and gin, which more than doubled in quantity from 1942 imports. Nevertheless, the quantity of distilled spirits consumed in 1943 was almost one-fourth below 1942. During 1944 supplies were greatly increased. As a result of the August, 1944, holiday, distillers produced 54 million gallons of 190-proof beverage spirits for use in blending with straight whiskies.

"The total consumption of distilled spirits last year is estimated at 165 million gallons, an increase of 13% over 1943, reflecting a considerable improvement in the supply situation. For example, the amount of blended whiskey produced by rectification in November, 1944, was double the volume in the same month last year, while the amount of gin produced by rectification in November was 20 times that of November, 1943.

"Industry sources indicate that following the January holiday retail stocks of distilled spirits may be restored to normal levels.

"Two major factors accounted for the increase in the average price of distilled spirits last year—the sharp increase in the excise tax rate and a shifting of brands. In this connection, it is pointed out that there has been a pronounced trend toward spirit blends in order to stretch out existing stocks of aged whiskey."—(U. S. Dept. of Commerce release, Jan. 17, 1945.)

From the above statement several things are obvious. First, the alcohol problem is becoming increasingly serious, both as to the amount of liquor consumed and the money cost to the nation. With distilled spirits consumption at 165 million gallons we have reached the pre-prohibition level of whiskey consumption. We are already drinking more beer than in pre-prohibition days. And that a time when grains of all kinds are badly needed for foodstuffs. In 1944 the federal government received approximately \$1.5 billions in revenue from liquor. But this revenue cost the public \$7 billions! It is a poor form of taxation that takes nearly \$5 from the pocket of the tax-payer in order to get \$1 into the treasury.

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Medical Corps. We are in accord with the purposes of the War Department that these men who have served honorably in the armed forces shall not be discriminated against in matters of discharge and in the benefits embodied in the G. I. Bill of Rights.

"We hold that the stake of the churches in the preservation of freedom of conscience suggests that the various communions strengthen their fellowship with such of their number as may be in prison and in Civilian Public Service. It is our hope that the churches will, until the government has assumed these responsibilities, seek through such procedures as have been approved by their national bodies to meet the maintenance costs and dependency needs of these men."

Even a casual reading of the resolution reveals how cautiously, guardedly and charily the committee approaches the problem. Obviously the committee lacks any clear conviction about the central issues involved. At this point cooperative Protestantism speaks with a confused voice. Many of the major communions which make up the Council's membership have been unable to give unanimous support to the position taken by their conscientious objector members, but most of them have recognized the consecrated Christian character those of their number who in obedience to what they believe to be the teachings of Jesus refuse to participate in war. The Federal Council avoids committing itself on this point. It expresses gratification over provisions for conscientious objectors far inferior to those of the British law. It welcomes "opportunities for constructive national service," some of which C. Os. feel to be such a tragic waste of effort that they have "walked out" of camp in the full knowledge that prison was the alternative. Overlooked is the fact that these men are drafted and assigned to work in forests, in soil conservation, on farms, in hospitals and other types of labor without regard for education, skill or experience, without pay, and without even food, clothing shelter or medical care being provided. No provision is made for dependents and if a C. O. is killed in the performance of his duties the government assumes no responsibility. Even German war prisoners are fed, clothed and housed in comfortable camps and if they work they are paid for their labor.

The real nub of the question is that the churches, (aside from the small groups known as "the historic peace churches," which have done an admirable job in meeting the challenge on behalf of Christianity as a whole), have not made up their minds whether a Christian is justified in following what he believes to be the will of God as against the demands of the state. It is all very well to urge the churches to "strengthen their fellowship" with C. O.s., but unless they believe that these men are standing on valid religious grounds there is precious little ground for fellowship.

Vacations With Pay for Workers Growing

Vacations with pay is becoming the accepted practice in American industry, according to the *CIO News*. At the present time 85% of all workers under union contracts enjoy such vacations. This means that 11,500,000 workers are enabled to take time off for rest and relaxation every year. In 1940 only 25% of the workers were covered by contracts that provided for vacations with pay. A year ago a week's vacation with pay after one year of service

was the accepted pattern. Today 56% of the workers whose union contracts cover this item—4,500,000 persons—receive two weeks vacation with pay. Under pressure of war production extra compensation is given to workers who forego their vacations.

Many of the unions are taking advantage of paid vacations to carry on workers' camps and conferences where rest and relaxation can be combined with study. A number of CIO unions operate summer camps for their members. The Canadian Workers Educational Association carries on a combination labor college and summer camp in an old mill at Port Hope, Ontario, where at nominal cost workers can mix boating, swimming, picnicking and resting with classes, quizzes, movies and discussion groups. The CIO has a number of such summer study camps.

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reign of peace, justice, goodwill and brotherhood among men—can never be brought about as long as nations continue to devastate one another every twenty-five years.

It is perhaps not too much to say that the American churches of all faiths have had a part in making the San Francisco conference possible. Following the Oxford and Edinburgh conferences in 1937, the International Missionary Conference in Madras in 1938, the world youth conference at Amsterdam and the conference of lay experts at Geneva in 1939, a series of conferences began in the United States that have had a far-reaching influence upon the nation. The Federal Council of Churches sponsored a conference of official representatives of the churches held in Philadelphia in February, 1940, prior to the fall of France and during the "phony war," which made proposals that might have settled the conflict and prevented the outbreak of war in the Pacific had they been heeded. In March 1942 a second conference was called at Delaware, Ohio, under the auspices of the newly formed Commission on a Just and Durable Peace of the Federal Council, to which 377 delegates were officially appointed by their respective religious communions and interdenominational agencies. In July, 1943, sixty-one Christian leaders from twelve different countries were convened at Princeton, N. J., under the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace. Just before President Roosevelt departed for the Yalta conference a third interdenominational conference was called by the Commission at Cleveland, Ohio. From each of these gatherings, all made up of officially appointed delegates, messages were addressed to the churches which were the subject of study and discussion in thousands of local congregations throughout the nation.

The task of the churches will not end with the final session of the conference. Its findings will be the subject of study in every nation on the face of the earth. Christians are obligated to give careful thought to the plans proposed and, if they offer any promise of accomplishing the purpose, give their support to them. In many quarters opposition will arise. Die-hard isolationists, near-sighted nationalists, and demagogues who thrive on prejudice and suspicion will do all in their power to defeat any world organization. As the churches have given leadership in bringing the conference to pass, so must they give leadership in seeing that its constructive proposals are given substance and life by unqualified acceptance by the nations.